DELCOURT

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ROCK & STONE

JEAN + VALEANI + GEORGES

ROCK & STONE
Volume 1/2

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CALDORIA.

SECOND PLANET IN THE SOL-4 SYSTEM.

CRiiii

TERRESTRIAL YEAR 2215.

TCHK

STAP!

OEC

OEC

KLAK

OEC

OEC

DOUGH! DOUGH! DOUGH!

HAVEN'T I ALREADY SEEN YOU SOMEWHERE?

YOU...

YES!

SUNSET

I KNEW IT!

STARBLAZE COMICS

MAJOR STONE

ADIEU, MAJOR STONE ! TES BALLES NE PEUVENT RIEN CONTRE LA CARAPACE DU...

CRAXOSAURUS !

"CRAXOSAURUS"? WHAT A CRAZY NAME...

WE GOT COMPANY, GUYS!

MARTIN'S

HA HA!

GET READY FOR COMBAT, MAJOR!

2213 MAY

GOOD NIGHT, STONE.

GOOD NIGHT, EVERYONE.

BAM

BAM

HRRMMM...

KOFF KOFF

BAM

THE DOOR! COUGH!

WHAT AN-- COUGH! IDIOT!

BAM

GOOD GOD, THIS THING IS SO HEAVY...

AHH!!

BAM!

DAMNIT!

BAM

DAMNIT!!

VVV-TCHK!

IT'S COMING FROM THE ROAD...

A MECHANICAL NOISE, A VAN...

OR SOMETHING ELSE...

STONE, YOU'RE UP!

vVvv TCHK!

vVvv TCHK!

?!!

vVvv TCHK!

DO NOT MOVE.

"THEY CAN SENSE HEAT, MOVEMENT, ELECTRIC SIGNALS. THEY CAN HEAR A FLY TAKE FLIGHT AT FIVE HUNDRED METERS. THEY CAN COUNT ITS LEGS FROM A DISTANCE THREE TIMES THAT..."

SOLDIER PERRY... WHAT DID HE SAY, AGAIN?

"BUT YOU MUST NOT THINK THEY ARE PERFECT. THEY WEAR OUT, THEY BUG. THEY BREAK DOWN..."

"LIKE ALL THE SHIT WE BUILD."

BRLMLMLRML

VRLSH

!!

CRACK!

thoracic camera – damaged, please replace – lens.

NO, NOT THAT! NOT **NOW!**

WHERE ARE YOU...

WHERE ARE YOU, YA BASTARD?!!

YOUR LEFT!

KRASH

00100011000.

WHO...

WHO SPOKE?

I'M HERE, HELLO...

MY NAME'S STAN.

STAN GELBSTEIN.

KZHT KZHT

I THOUGHT THAT ALL ROBOTS WANTED TO KILL HUMANS...

KZHT KZHT

ALL OF THEM EXCEPT ME, THEN. ONE COULD SAY THAT I'M... THE EXCEPTION THAT PROVES THE RULE.

THANKS FOR REPAIRING MY CAMERA, IN ANY CASE. YOU'RE REALLY GOOD WITH YOUR HANDS.

THIS? THIS IS NOTHING. SINCE I'VE BEEN LIVING HERE, I'VE TAUGHT MYSELF HOW TO USE ALL THESE TOOLS LYING AROUND.

ARE THERE NO ADULTS WITH YOU?

NO. MY MOTHER DIED WHEN I WAS LITTLE. MY FATHER WAS DEPLOYED AT THE START OF THE WAR. THEY LEFT TWO SOLDIERS IN HIS PLACE TO WATCH OVER ME...

CLIC

THEN, OTHER SOLDIERS CAME FOR THEM, AND THEY HAD TO LEAVE, TOO.

AND THEY LEFT YOU ALL ALONE?

ONE OF 'EM DIDN'T WANT TO, BUT THEY FORCED HIM.

WAS IT A LONG TIME AGO?

WELL... MORE THAN A YEAR AGO NOW, I GUESS.

MORE THAN A YEAR? MY GOD, THAT'S CRAZY...

STAP

PRETTY COOL FIGURINES, EH?

ANYWAY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT HERE? I MEAN, APART FROM BRINGING GIANT MILLIPEDES AND WRECKING MY WIND TURBINE?

I...

I'M SORRY.

I'M HEADING UP NORTH.

MY SENSORS TRACKED THE MILLIPEDE TO A POINT A FEW MILES FROM HERE, THEN NOTHING.

IT MUST HAVE REALIZED THAT I WAS... DIFFERENT. AND FOLLOWED ME HERE. WITH THIS STORM, MY INSTRUMENTS WEREN'T WORKING TOO WELL.

WHAT'S UP NORTH?

WELL... BUSINESS I HAVE TO ATTEND TO.

OK, I GUESS I'LL FIND OUT WHEN WE'RE THERE.

WHAT? YOU'RE NOT COMING WITH ME! YOU'RE BETTER OFF HERE.

OH REALLY? WERE YOU PLANNING ON FIXING MY WIND TURBINE?

WITHOUT IT, I HAVE NO ELECTRICITY. NO LIGHTING. NO WATER.

AND I'VE NEARLY EMPTIED MY EMERGENCY BATTERY TO FIX YOUR CAMERA.

...

DO YOU HAVE FOOD? WATER?

A LITTLE, YEAH.

WELL, TAKE IT ALL. BUT DON'T TAKE TOO LONG...

I DON'T HAVE A LOT OF TIME LEFT.

WHY CAN'T I SIT IN THE SEAT?

WELL... BECAUSE YOUR FIGURINES OF MAJOR TOM ARE SITTING IN IT?

AND BECAUSE THEY WON'T MESS WITH MY CONTROLS WITHOUT ASKING FOR PERMISSION, WILL THEY?

HEY! NOT MAJOR TOM... MAJOR **STONE!**

ACTUALLY, NOW THAT WE'RE A TEAM, I THINK WE SHOULD HAVE CODE-NAMES. I'LL BE "STONE".

STAN, STANLEY... SOUNDS A LITTLE OLD-FASHIONED.

I SEE.

SO, WHAT ABOUT YOURS?

UH... "METAL GIANT"?

MEH.

"ROCKY".

THAT'S AWESOME!

PENG! PENG!

"ROCKY THE GENTLE ROBOT", IF YOU WANT...

MM'YEAH... DON'T GET CARRIED AWAY.

COMPARED TO THE OTHER ROBOTS AROUND HERE...

BY THE WAY, YOU DIDN'T TELL ME WHY YOU WEREN'T LIKE THEM.

LET'S SAY THAT I DON'T TAKE MY ORDERS FROM THE SAME PLACE.

THESE DAYS, THE OTHER MACHINES OF CALDORIA LISTEN TO A SINGLE VOICE...

HAIVĒ.

WHAT'S THAT, THEN?

WHAT? HAIVÉ ?

UH, NO. WELL, YEAH. AND THAT THING AHEAD OF US.

THAT'S AN ENERGY RELAY POINT. IT WAS BUILT BEFORE THE WAR TO RECHARGE ELECTRIC VEHICLES.

HAIVÉ...

IT WAS A "HEURISTIC ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE" THAT BECAME "VIRAL AND EVOLVING". A HUMAN CREATION, CAPABLE ON LEARNING FROM ITS MISTAKES THAT, ONE FINE DAY, STARTED CONSIDERING US... WELL, YOU, AS A MENACE.

NOW, ALL THE ROBOTS ON THE PLANETS OBEY IT. THEY USE THIS SORT OF RELAY POINT TO RECHARGE THEIR BATTERIES.

STAY HERE. I'M GOING TO MAKE SURE THERE'S NO DANGER.

I MEAN... IF THERE WERE A ROBOT THERE, WE'D HAVE SEEN IT, NO?

IT'S PRETTY COOL TO FIND A BIKE JUST LYING OUT IN THE OPEN HERE.

COOL.

YEAH.

C'MON, WE GOTTA GO NOW. LEAVE THE BIKE, I DON'T INTEND TO STICK TO THE ROAD.

VVVNNNNNN

SO WHAT? I'M SURE IT COULD RIDE OVER A COUPLE...

STON...

OUCH!

SSSSKKRRR

KRASH

KRRRR

ALL GOOD! NOTHING BROKEN.

ARE YOU NOT GONNA USE THE RELAY POINT TO RECHARGE?

I HAVE A URANIUM BATTERY IMPORTED FROM EARTH. NO NEED TO CHANGE IT FOR A FEW YEARS YET.

AÏE!

OUILLE!

SHOULD WE NOT DESTROY IT, THEN? SO THE OTHER ROBOTS DON'T USE IT?

A REAL COMMANDO, YOU ARE. A STUDENT OF MAJOR STONE...

YOU KNOW, HAIVÉ WON'T ALWAYS BE AROUND. THE SURVIVING HUMANS WILL BE HAPPY TO HAVE THESE RELAY POINTS AROUND, TO AVOID STARTING FROM SCRATCH...

AND IT'S BETTER TO THINK A LITTLE ABOUT THE FUTURE, FOR BOTH OF US.

C'MON, LET'S GO!

RIGHT. WE STOPPING HERE?

TO DO WHAT?

WELL, TO SLEEP. IT'S NIGHTTIME, I'M EXHAUSTED... DO I NEED TO GO ON?

NO, WE DON'T HAVE TIME.

IF YOU WANT, YOU CAN SIT ON MY SEAT. I'LL KEEP GOING.

OH YEAH?

EARLIER, I WASN'T ALLOWED IN THERE BECAUSE I'D MESS WITH YOUR CONTROLS, AND NOW THAT IT SUITS YOU, I GOTTA GO INSIDE THE COCKPIT?

I'M NOT A ROBOT! I CAN'T BE AWAKE ALL THE TIME! AND I'M NOT GOING TO SLEEP IN SOMETHING THAT STINKS OF OIL, THAT SHAKES BACK AND FORTH, AND WHOSE FOOTSTEPS WE CAN HEAR FROM A COUPLE OF MILES OFF!

SORRY, I SHOULD HAVE REALIZED THAT YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND. I'M JUST TIRED...

NO, I DO UNDERSTAND. MORE THAN YOU COULD IMAGINE.

ACTUALLY, I COULD MAKE MORE OF AN EFFORT, AND WAIT...

FRSH!

YOU GOTTA FIND OTHER BRANCHES. THE NIGHTS ARE COLD OUT HERE...

THAT LASER BEAM WAS COOL. SO I GUESS THAT MAKES YOU A MILITARY ROBOT?

NO, IT'S A WELDING LASER.

HANG ON... EXCUSE ME.

KSSHHHHH

HUH?

Remote user connection – lost. Automatic mode – activated.

UH HUH...

ZZZzzTT

HEY! YOU SEEM LIKE A PRETTY COOL B...

FRASH

OH... WHAT'S THAT?

ARE YOU CRAZY?! WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?!

NO, DON'T...

DON'T BE SCARED.

IT WAS A CALDORIAN HORSEFLY. ITS BITE CAN BE FATAL.

SORRY TO HAVE SCARED YOU, BUT WHEN I SAW IT, I SHOT OUT OF REFLEX.

FATAL, AS IN... IF WE GET BIT, WE DIE?

NOT ALL THE TIME, AND NOT RIGHT AWAY... ANYWAY, I DIDN'T WANT TO TAKE THAT RISK.

LUCKILY, THERE'S NOT MANY LEFT. I'M SURPRISED TO HAVE SEEN ONE OUT HERE...

WHY "NOT MANY LEFT"?

WE USED NANO-INSECTICIDES TO ELIMINATE THOSE PESTS TEN YEARS AGO. NOT SOON ENOUGH, AT LEAST FOR ME.

DID THEY KILL A LOT OF PEOPLE?

WAIT...

MOM... THEY TOLD ME THAT SHE'D BEEN BIT BY A SORT OF FLY...

STAN... I'M SORRY...

TCHK TCHK TCHK TCHK TCHK

HANG ON, DID YOU HEAR SOMETHING?

HMM... MY SENSORS AREN'T PICKING UP ON ANYTHING. PROBABLY THE WIND...

TCH TCH TCH TCH

HOW ON EARTH... ?

HEY! WE ALL GOT OUR SECRETS.

I'M SANDY. WHO ARE YOU?

UH... I'M STONE. AND HE'S ROCKY.

I FOUND HIM TWO DAYS AGO, AND HE'S... ACCOMPANYING ME. WE'RE HEADED NORTH.

INCREDIBLE...

HE'S NOT HOSTILE AT ALL.

IS HE YOURS?

STOP.

LET'S BE CLEAR ABOUT SOME THINGS.

NUMERO UNO, STOP TALKING AS IF I'M NOT RIGHT HERE.

NUMERO DOS, I AM NOT THE PERSONAL ESCORT OF MR. STANLEY, A.K.A. "STONE"...

AND WHILE WE'RE ON THAT, I AM NOT SOME GIANT TOY, EITHER.

NOW, LITTLE GIRL: WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? WHERE DID YOU GET THAT INVISIBILITY CLOAK... THAT BIT OF TECHNOLOGY WORTH TEN MILLION CREDITS, THAT YOU'VE JUST STUFFED IN YOUR BAG?

COOL IT, IT WAS JUST...

I WAS HEADED BACK TO MY TRIBE WHEN I SAW YOU TWO. I FOUND THE CAPE, IT'S MINE, IS THAT FINE WITH YOU?

AND I'VE GOT QUESTIONS TOO, YOU KNOW.

HOW COULD YOU BE THE ONLY MACHINE ON THIS FUCKED-UP PLANET THAT DOESN'T ATTACK HUMANS?

AND WHAT IF YOU'RE WORKING FOR HAIVÉ ? HOW SHOULD I KNOW YOU'RE NOT A SPY?

NO, HE... WHAT'S YOUR TRIBE?

hypertension – Detected. Time without sleep – 102 hours. Sleep mode ON.

NO! NOT NOW!

Remote user connection – Lost...

Automatic mode – activated.

IT'S BEEN OVER TEN MINUTES SINCE HE STOPPED MOVING. IN MY OPINION, YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME.

HE DID THE SAME THING EARLIER. BUT IT DIDN'T LAST...

Remote user – Connected.

AH!

CAREFUL...

STONE!

0111000??

TRK TRK TRK TRK

ZT ZT ZT ZT

WE'RE NEARLY THERE.

WHY ARE YOU LAGGING BEHIND AGAIN? I TOLD YOU THAT WE LEFT HIM BEHIND.

IT ANNOYS ME THAT I LEFT MY BAG.

DON'T WORRY. WHERE WE'RE GOING, YOU WON'T NEED IT.

THERE WAS STUFF IN IT THAT I WAS... ATTACHED TO.

WHAT SORT OF STUFF?

UH...

DON'T WORRY. ANYWAY, IS "SANDY" REALLY YOUR NAME?

IT IS NOW...

STANLEY. OH, SORRY. "STONE".

AND YOUR ROBOT, "ROCKY". IS HE REALLY CALLED THAT?

NO, BUT... I THINK HE LIKED IT.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK ANY MORE...

YOU HEARD WHAT HE SAID. WITH HIS MECHANICAL VOICE... AS IF HE WERE CONTROLLED FROM A DISTANCE. AND THAT HE'D LOST CONTACT.

AND AFTER?

AFTER, THE SAME THING HAPPENED TO HIM THAT'S HAPPENED TO ALL OTHER MACHINES...

IT'S THIS WAY.

HAIVÉ TOOK CONTROL OF HIM.

ARE THERE A LOT OF YOU IN THIS TRIBE?

YOU'LL SEE. CAREFUL, YOU GOTTA CRAWL A BIT HERE...

THERE!

IT'S ALL GOOD, SHERIFF. HE'S WITH ME.

"ALL GOOD"? SINCE WHEN DO LITTLE GIRLS DECIDE THAT, HUH?

HEY! I HOPE YOU PLAN ON SHARING YOUR RATIONS WITH YOUR LITTLE PAL THERE. IF HE TOUCHES MINE, I'M GONNA BITE!

AH, SHERIFF AND BLACKJACK... WHEN YOU NEED A COUPLE OF WINNERS, WE KNOW WHO TO COUNT ON.

C'MON, TOUGH GUY, PUT THAT GUN AWAY. IF IT EVER ACTUALLY DID ANYTHING, WE'D HAVE KNOWN BY NOW.

WHY ARE YOU UP AND OUT OF BED, THEN? TO BREAK MY BALLS? DO US A FAVOR AND TAKE A HIKE!

THAT'S ENOUGH! STOP YOUR CHILDISHNESS...

DON'T YOU SEE WHAT'S IMPORTANT HERE? IF SANDY FOUND THIS BOY...

IT MEANS THAT THERE'S OTHER SURVIVOR GROUPS, LIKE US!

RIGHT...

ACTUALLY...

I WAS WITH... UH...

WITH A ROBOT.

WHAT THE HELL IS ALL THAT ABOUT?

WHERE IS HE NOW, THIS ROBOT?

STAN... WELL, STONE... LET ME DO THE TALKING, OKAY?

I FOUND HIM A FEW MILES FROM HERE, SETTING UP CAMP WITH A BIG EXOSKELETON. A SORT OF OLD INDUSTRIAL MODEL, BUT IT SPOKE JUST LIKE YOU AND ME. THEN, THE BIG MACHINE SEEMED TO HAVE LOST IT, AND I THINK THAT HAIVÉ TOOK CONTROL. THEN, I USED MY CLOAK TO FLEE, WITH STAN. I CHECKED, IT DIDN'T FOLLOW US.

SO, THERE'S STILL MACHINES THAT AREN'T ALWAYS UNDER A.I. COMMAND? THAT SEEMS PRETTY FAR-FETCHED...

THAT ROBOT, DID IT HAVE SOMETHING WRITTEN ON IT?

UH...

YES. "RCK1".

A RCK1? THOSE THINGS WERE IMPORTED FROM THE EARTH AT THE START OF COLONIZATION, OVER 40 YEARS AGO. THEY ARE ABOUT AS INTELLIGENT AS EXCAVATORS. SO, TO MAKE THEM SPEAK...

THEY CAN'T BE CONTROLLED REMOTELY?

I THINK SO, BUT TO DO THAT, SOMEONE WOULD NEED TO TRICK HAIVÉ'S SUB-PROGRAMS... EVEN THE HACKERS IN THE ARMY BANGED THEIR HEADS AGAINST THOSE.

GUYS, GUYS!

SORRY TO HAVE INTERRUPTED YOUR SPECULATIONS, BUT WHY NOT LET OUR YOUNG FRIEND HERE SPEAK?

AFTER ALL, HE'S THE ONE BEST PLACED TO TELL US WHERE HE'S FROM, AND HOW HE MET THIS TALKING ROBOT.

YOU HUNGRY, I BET?

UH... A LITTLE.

HERE.

AND DON'T LISTEN TO THAT IDIOT BLACKJACK. WE GOT ENOUGH TO GO AROUND FOR GUESTS....

LEMME JUST SHAY, IT'SH PRETTY - GULP - COMPLICATED...

NO RUSH. TAKE YOUR TIME...

DON'T HESITATE TO TELL US EVERYTHING, FROM THE START.

2206...

IDIOTS!

INCOMPETENTS!

ASSASSINS!

SIR, LET ME REMIND YOU THAT YOUR SPOUSE CERTAINLY SUCCUMBED TO AN ALLERGIC REACTION. I'M SORRY THAT THE TREATMENT DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO WORK...

THAT BEING SAID, WE DID AN ANALYSIS ON THE INSECT'S BARB. IT WILL HELP US LEARN MORE, PERHAPS...

I DON'T GIVE A FUCK ABOUT YOUR ANALYSES! IT'S TOO LATE!

DO YOU HEAR ME? TOO LATE!!

PLEASE, I UNDERSTAND YOUR PAIN, BUT TRY...

TRY TO THINK OF YOUR SON.

A CALDORIAN HORSEFLY? SHE WASN'T THE ONLY ONE, ALAS...

BUT IF WE KNEW THAT THEY WERE DANGEROUS, WHY DIDN'T WE DO ANYTHING BEFORE?

BECAUSE THEY WEREN'T DANGEROUS AT THE BEGINNING, THAT'S WHY!

HOW'S THAT?

WE THINK THAT THE MINING OPERATION EXPOSED THEM TO MICRO-PARTICLES THAT MADE THEM MUTATE. BUT IT'S JUST A THEORY...

C'MON, HARUKI. IT'S THE TRUTH, AND YOU KNOW IT!

EXCEPT, THE MINING OPERATION IS WHAT ALLOWED NINETY PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE ON THIS GODFORSAKEN ROCK TO SURVIVE. THERE WEREN'T MANY OF US WHO HAD ANY OTHER IDEAS...

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, MISS ANNA, YOU ALWAYS REPEAT THE SAME SPIEL.

ON ONE SIDE, THE EVIL MINING COMPANY. ON THE OTHER, YOUR LITTLE COMMUNE OF VEGETARIANS.... AND BETWEEN THOSE TWO, WELL, WHAT?

APART FROM THAT GRUMP, VICTORIA, THERE'S NO ONE HERE WHO WORKED FOR H&J THAT I KNOW OF.

MY "LITTLE COMMUNE" MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN ENTIRELY TO YOUR TASTES, BUT I THINK I REMEMBER THAT IT WELCOMED YOU WHEN YOU NEEDED IT. SO FOR THAT, YOU COULD MAYBE SHOW IT A BIT MORE RESPECT.

PLUS HER VEGETABLES, YOU AIN'T THE LAST ONE TO EAT THEM, NO?

AS FOR THE HARPER & JONES MINING COMPANY, YOU UNDERESTIMATE THE HOLD IT HAD OVER THE WHOLE OF OUR SOCIETY.

THE POLICE, OUR HEALTH SERVICES, THEY WERE ALL BANKROLLED BY IT...

GO ON, KID. MAKE HER LIE. WHAT DID THEY DO, YOUR PARENTS... WELL, BEFORE YOUR MOTHER...

BOTH OF THEM DID THE SAME THING. THEY WORKED FOR H&J.

NOT TO MENTION CERTAIN, LESS LEGAL ACTIVITIES, THAT WOULD HAVE DEFINITELY HAD A HARDER TIME IN ITS ABSENCE.

"THEY WORKED FOR THE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT."

WHERE'S DADDY?

STILL AT WORK, BUT HE SHOULD BE COMING BACK SOON.

GO BACK TO BED, LITTLE MAN. IT'S LATE, YOU KNOW...

NO. I'MMA WAIT FOR HIM.

WHASSAT?

SURPRISE!

MR. GELBSTEIN.

HELLO, GABBY.

DADDY!

WELL, STAN? NOT ASLEEP YET?

RIGHT. LOOK WHAT I BROUGHT BACK FOR YOU!

THE PERSONAL COLLECTION OF MY COLLEAGUE, MURRAY. HE'S HEADED BACK TO EARTH. SO, I TOOK THESE OFF HIM FOR NEXT TO NOTHING.

THESE THINGS ARE FROM WELL BEFORE COLONIZATION, Y'KNOW! VERY HARD TO FIND TODAY...

IS HE NOT A BIT YOUNG FOR THOSE, SIR?

I THOUGHT THAT YOU MIGHT READ THEM TO HIM, GABBY.

I MEANT TO SAY: A LITTLE YOUNG FOR THESE SORTS OF STORIES.

WELL.

IF YOU SAY SO...

KID, THAT'S NOT WHAT WE'RE ASKING.

WHEN THESE FUCKING MACHINES STARTED KILLING EVERYONE, IN NEO-TOLEDO, WHAT WERE YOU DOING? WHERE WERE YOU?

I DON'T GET IT, WHERE ARE WE GOING?

FAR FROM HERE, TO THE SOUTH.

C'MON, HURRY UP! I'LL EXPLAIN ON THE ROAD.

PROFESSOR GELBSTEIN, WE'RE HERE!

I DIDN'T KNOW WE EVEN HAD THIS HOUSE.

I HAD IT BUILT A LITTLE AFTER YOUR BIRTH. A BUNGALOW IN THE COUNTRY, FAR FROM THE CITY.

BUT WHEN MOM DIED...

RIGHT. IT'S GOT WATER, ELECTRICITY, AND THE GREENHOUSE SHOULD HAVE EDIBLE VEGETABLES READY IN A MONTH'S TIME.

I DON'T KNOW FOR HOW LONG YOU'LL LIVE OUT HERE, BUT SEEING THE DAMAGE THOSE MACHINES ARE DOING IN THE CITY, I SUPPOSE WE SHOULD PLAN LONG-TERM.

I CAN'T GO WITH YOU?

KIDS! WHO'D HAVE 'EM, EH?

STAN, DO I NEED TO REPEAT MYSELF AGAIN? I HAVE BEEN RE-ASSIGNED!

I WAS ALREADY LUCKY ENOUGH TO HAVE TWO SOLDIERS ASSIGNED TO WATCH YOU. I THINK THERE'S A WAY TO TAKE THAT FUCKING A.I. OFFLINE, BUT WHERE I'M GOING, I CAN'T HAVE YOU GETTING UNDERFOOT!

HEY! ARE YOU STANLEY?

STAN'S GOOD.

AND YOU ARE.... PERRY?

YEP. YOUR NEW NANNY.

WELL, WITH CORPORAL HENDRICKS, BUT HE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE TOO BIG A FAN OF KIDS.

ANYWAY, YOU CAN CALL ME ALEX.

CRASH!

ALEX! THANK YOU, GOD!

KEEP GOING! CONTINUE, KID!

UH....

CALM DOWN, VICTORIA. LET HIM EXPLAIN.

GO ON, STAN. THAT MAN WAS HER LITTLE BROTHER. SHE'S BEEN TALKING ABOUT HIM FOR OVER A YEAR NOW!

HE AND HENDRICKS STAYED FOR ABOUT A MONTH. HE WAS NICE, WE GOT ALONG WELL.

THEN ONE DAY, A BIG CONVOY OF SOLDIERS CAME TO GET THEM.

And the boy? You going to let him die out here?

GO CHECK OUT NEO-TOLEDO, SOLDIER. DEAD BOYS AREN'T WANTING FOR NUMBERS OUT THERE.

I NEED ALL AVAILABLE PERSONNEL, NO EXCEPTIONS. IF THAT'S A PROBLEM FOR YOU...

WE CAN SORT OUT THE PROBLEM OF THE BOY, RIGHT NOW.

HE LEFT HIS HELMET BEHIND FOR ME, WHEN HE LEFT. I WOULD HAVE GIVEN IT TO YOU, BUT I LEFT IT BEHIND, IN THE DESERT. WITH RO... WITH THE ROBOT.

SO THEN THIS ROBOT, WHERE'D HE COME FROM?

I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM. I STAYED AT THE FARM. I HAD VEGGIES FROM THE GREENHOUSE, AND PLENTY OF CANNED GOODS.

THE TIME PASSED. I DIDN'T SEE ANY ONE ELSE. ONCE, I TRIED TO LEAVE BY WALKING OUT, BUT I GOT SCARED AND HEADED BACK.

THEN, A FEW DAYS AGO, THE ROBOT CAME. HE SAID HE HAD SOMETHING HE NEEDED TO DO, UP NORTH...

NORTH IS WHERE NEO-TOLEDO IS, RIGHT? WITH HAIVÉ AND ITS MACHINES?

THERE'S... A LOT OF THINGS. BUT WE'LL HAVE THE CHANCE TO SPEAK ABOUT THEM LATER..

... WHILE WE WAIT, I THINK IT'S OUR TURN TO INTRODUCE OURSELVES.

I'M ANNA SHERMAN, BUT FOR A REASON THAT ESCAPES ME, EVERYONE CALLS ME MISS ANNA. I WORKED IN DEVELOPMENT AT THE GREENLAND AGRICULTURAL COMPLEX, A FEW MILES FROM HERE. TO THIS DAY, THAT'S WHERE WE GET A LOT OF OUR FOOD FROM.

SHERIFF AND ME FOUND WORK AT GREENLAND WHEN SHIT STARTED TO HIT THE FAN IN NEO-TOLEDO. WE KNOW THE DESERT PRETTY WELL. WE FOUND THIS HIDEOUT OURSELVES.

TODAY, WE'RE IN CHARGE OF SECURITY. HAIVÉ'S GOT ROBOTS DOING PATROLS, BUT WE GOT GUNS WITH A PRETTY BIG KICK. WE CAN TAKE CARE OF BUSINESS.

WELL, LUCKILY, THEY'VE NEVER COME HERE.

I'M WAGNER. I WORKED AT RELAY POINT 21, ON THE ROAD HEADED INTO TOWN. WHEN THE OTHERS PROPOSED TO SET UP CAMP HERE, I FOLLOWED THEM.

I'M HARUKI MORI, AND THIS IS HELENA AND OUR DAUGHTER AYAKA. I WAS A DOCTOR IN NEO-TOLEDO.

WE NARROWLY SUCCEEDED IN ESCAPING. MANY OTHERS DID NOT HAVE SUCH LUCK...

AND WHAT THEY FORGOT TO TELL YOU, IS THAT I'M THE ONE IN CHARGE OF PROVISIONS! I'LL SHOW YOU, IF YOU WANT.

WELL, YOU SEE, WE ALL GOT OUR LITTLE SPECIALTIES. AND YOU, WHAT CAN YOU DO BEST?

THIS HEAT, THOUGH... WHAT A PAIN!

UH... I KNOW HOW TO WELD...

AND I KNOW HOW TO CARVE ROCKS.

ROCKS? COME TELL ME ABOUT IT.

THE REST OF YOU, GIVE HIM SOME SPACE! WE'RE GONNA FIND SOMEPLACE QUIET...

A GODSEND. THERE'S NO OTHER WORD FOR IT.

A WHAT?

YOU SAW MY BROTHER, ALIVE. AND TODAY, YOU'RE HERE, IN FRONT OF ME.

IT'S A SIGN. I THOUGHT I'D LOST HIM, BUT I WAS WRONG.

HIM TOO, HE'S STILL HERE. I CAN SENSE HIM. SOMEWHERE...

HE TOOK CARE OF YOU, AS MUCH AS HE COULD. IT'S MY TURN, NOW.

STOP THAT.

BUT... YOU, TOO... WEREN'T YOU FOND OF HIM?

SO WHAT? WHAT GOOD DOES THAT FUCKING DO?

HIM, MY DAD, THEY ALL LEFT! ALL OF 'EM!

THEY'RE DEAD! YOU THINK I DIDN'T GET THAT?

THEY ARE **DEAD!**

AGA?

!

DON'T BE MAD AT HER.

SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN PROTECTIVE WITH OUR BABY. WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THE MACHINES DIDN'T HELP.

DON'T BOTHER, I GET IT.

GET WHAT?

WELL... JUST THAT... WHEN SANDY SPOKE TO ME ABOUT A TRIBE, I THOUGHT IT WAS MORE... UH...

WITH FEROCIOUS WARRIORS, RITUALLY SCARRED AND TATTOOED?

AND INSTEAD OF THAT, HERE YOU ARE WITH A BUNCH OF CRAZIES, STUCK BETWEEN THREE ROCKS...

A LITTLE, YEAH. NOT ENTIRELY. LIKE, YOU, FOR EXAMPLE... YOU SEEM NORMAL.

OH YEAH? DO YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW I LEFT NEO-TOLEDO?

ONE DAY, AT THE HOSPITAL I WAS WORKING AT, ONE OF MY ASSISTANT ROBOTS STARTED TO ACT BIZARRELY.

WE KNEW THAT AN A.I. HAD TAKEN CONTROL OF A RESEARCH BUILDING SEVERAL DAYS EARLIER. AND THAT THE ARMY HAD PUT UP FIREWALLS TO CONTAIN IT. WE HAD BEEN ORDERED TO BE ALERT FOR ANY STRANGE BEHAVIOR.

E332

I CAME HOME WITHOUT SAYING ANYTHING, AND I LEFT THE CITY WITH MY WIFE AND MY DAUGHTER. A LITTLE WHILE AFTER, WE FOUND OUT VIA THE RADIO THAT THE FIREWALLS HAD NOT WORKED, AND THAT ALL THE AUTOMATED SYSTEMS IN THE CITY WERE RISING UP AGAINST HUMANS.

WANTING TO DEAL WITH THE MOST URGENT ISSUE, I MIGHT HAVE ALLOWED MY COLLEAGUES, FRIENDS, INNOCENT PEOPLE TO DIE.

BUT YOU SAVED YOUR FAMILY.

YES, A LITTLE WHILE AFTER WE SETTLED, I BROKE MY LEG OUT HERE. MY WIFE, WITHOUT ANY SORT OF MEDICAL TRAINING, AMPUTATED IT HERSELF.

BLACKJACK, AN EX-JUNKIE, OFFERED ME THE FEW OPIATES HE HAD LEFT.

AND THAT MOANER, WAGNER, DID EVERYTHING HE COULD TO CRAFT ME A PROSTHETIC LEG, WITH WHAT HE HAD AVAILABLE.

YOU THINK THERE'S OTHER SURVIVORS?

IF THAT'S THE CASE, I WON'T GUARANTEE THAT THEY'RE BETTER THAN US. BUT EVEN STILL...

IF YOU ARE TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT YOUR ROBOT FRIEND... IF IT APPEARS THAT HAIVE IS NOT AS POWERFUL AS WE ONCE THOUGHT...

IT'S A HOPE WORTH CLINGING ON TO.

S-STAN... ?

Subject – Not located.

WHAT?!

I repeat – Subject – Not located.

SHIT! THIS IS YOUR FAULT, YOU HEAR ME?! IF ANYTHING BAD HAPPENED TO HIM..

AND WHAT ABOUT THE RCK1? IS IT LOST, TOO?

search in progress...

Subject – Located.

Connection in progress...

0100100111?!

RIGHT, FROM NOW ON, I'M NOT LETTING GO.

I'M GLAD YOU CAME WITH ME.

YOU SURE WE DON'T NEED TO BE WEARING THE CLOAK?

LATER. IT'LL SLOW US DOWN. AND I NEVER SAW A ROBOT AROUND HERE, ANYWAY.

DO YOU COME HERE OFTEN?

YEAH.

TO GET RATIONS?

YUP.

WHY YOU, AND NOT THE OTHERS?

BECAUSE THEY'RE TOO SCARED.

AND IT'S **MY** CLOAK.

DO YOU NOT HAVE ANY PARENTS? SIBLINGS?

MY PARENTS DIED WHEN I WAS LITTLE. A CAR ACCIDENT. I WENT TO FOSTER CARE.

THEN, WHEN I WAS TWELVE, THEY ASKED IF I WANTED TO DO A TRAINING COURSE IN THE COUNTRY, AT A PLACE CALLED GREENLAND. I SAID YES.

ONE DAY, WE LEARNED THAT THERE WAS WEIRD STUFF HAPPENING IN THE CITY, AND AFTER THAT, NO MORE NEWS. WE STARTED TO FLIP OUT. SOME GIRL WENT APESHIT ON ME OVER NEXT TO NOTHING...

I'D HAD ENOUGH. I DECIDED TO GO SOMEWHERE ELSE.

AND THEN...

STAP

SOLDIER PERRY? ALEX... WAS HE WITH THEM, YOU THINK?

YEAH, I THINK SO.

BUT I WON'T BE THE ONE TO TELL VICTORIA THE BAD NEWS.

SO THEN WHAT? DID YOU GO BACK TO GREENLAND?

REST STOP 21

0,6 mi

YES. A LOT OF THEM WENT BACK TO THE CITY, TO TRY TO...

HANG ON, WE GOTTA PUT THE CLOAK ON.

WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT LATER, THEN?

WE DON'T HAVE TO. THIS MUTES SOUNDS, TOO.

C'MON, LET'S KEEP GOING. THE RELAY POINT ISN'T TOO FAR.

21

H&J

RELAY POINT REST STOP 21

2

21

1100 1001

CAN'T SEE TOO WELL WHAT'S GOING ON...

MAYBE, BUT THEY WON'T SEE US AT ALL.

WHAT! IS ***THAT*** WHERE WE'RE GOING? IT'S CRAWLING WITH ROBOTS!

HMM, TRUE. THEY MUST BE DOING STOCK CHECK.

THE WHAT?

WAGNER EXPLAINED IT TO ME. HE WORKED HERE, BEFORE.

WHEN WE TAKE PROVISIONS, AND WE CHECK OUT WITH THIS CARD, IT TRANSMITS THE DATA TO NEO-TOLEDO... AND SOMETIMES, ROBOTS COME TO BRING BACK WHAT'S MISSING.

BUT... DID THEY NOT STOP DOING THAT WHEN HAIVÉ TOOK OVER?

WELL, NO.

WE DISCUSSED IT A LOT WITH THE OTHERS... IS IT A TRAP? OR IS IT JUST SOMETHING THE MACHINES OF THE CITY DO WITHOUT THINKING? BECAUSE THEY'RE PROGRAMMED TO DO IT?

THE ONLY THING THAT CHANGED, IS THAT THERE'S GUARDIAN ROBOTS ON THE ROOF. THEY'VE BEEN THERE FOR A FEW MONTHS, BUT WITH THE CLOAK, THEY'RE USELESS.

TIME TO GO!

ROCKY... I MEAN, RCK1... HE WAS SMART. NOT LIKE THEM...

MYEAH. THAT DIDN'T STOP HAIVÉ FROM TAKING HIM OVER, LIKE THE OTHERS.

C'MON, AS SOON AS THAT VAN MOVES, WE'RE OFF.

TCH TCH TCH TCH TCH TCH

CRIII

HRI

WHAT DO WE TAKE?

I'LL TAKE CARE OF THAT. OPEN THE BAGS.

Weets

Healthness

OATS

17 576

BIP!

HRI

0101

0101

STAN! DOWN!

BLANG!

BDAM BDAM BDAM BDAM BDAM BDAM

1011?

ROL ROLROLROLROL

CLAC!

TCH TCH TCH TCH

1011

TSK

ARE YOU SURE THEY'RE NOT FOLLOWING US?

YEAH. I SAW THE ONE WHO JUMPED DOWN, LATER GO BACK UP ON THE RELAY POINT ROOF.

IN THE MEANTIME, IT NEARLY KILLED YOU BOTH!

I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE WE PUT SUCH RISKY TASKS IN THE HANDS OF CHILDREN.

WHY DON'T YOU WALTZ OVER THERE YOURSELF, THEN?

I CAN'T, BECAUSE OF MY LEG. YOU KNOW THAT.

WE'RE ALREADY BUSY WITH TAKING CARE OF WATER. EACH MAN HAS A JOB, RIGHT?

HERE WE GO AGAIN.

YOU GOT A PROBLEM, ANNA?

NOT ANNA! **SHERMAN!** MY NAME IS **SHER-MAN!**

AH, WHAT A GREAT GROUP OF SURVIVORS WE GOT OURSELVES HERE! TOO COWARDLY TO PROTECT THE CHILDREN, TOO STUPID TO REMEMBER A SINGLE SURNAME!

C'MON, CHILL. WE'RE ALL ON EDGE. THE KIDS WERE IN DANGER, THAT'S TRUE, BUT...

SHH! DO YOU NOT HEAR SOMETHING?

VRRRRRRNNNN

MY GOD...

IT AIN'T THE GENERATOR!

NO, IT'S COMING FROM OUTSIDE. LISTEN!

Subjects, stay near immobilization units! All resistance will be punished with death!

AYAKA!

IT'S OKAY, MY DARLING.

MOMMY'S HERE.

HELENA!

DOC, NO!

RUN AWAY!

AYAKA...

AAAAARRRR

BAM BAM BAM BAM

CRAK!

AAAARR

AAAAAA

01000

NO!

TOOM

STAN!
MOVE!

STAN!

STAP

NNNNG...

PLAF

NGH!

STAN!
THE CLOAK!

1101?

AAAAH!
LET ME GO,
YOU BASTARD!
LET ME GO!

OW!

DAMNIT!

FLIP

I KEEP...

1110!

?!

HEY!

NO! COUGH! NOOOOO!!

CRASH

YOU OK? ARE YOU NOT HURT?

NO, I... IT'S OK.

QUICK! WE CAN'T STAY HERE!

STOP WIGGLING. I MIGHT HURT YOU BY ACCIDENT.

BUT... THE OTHER SURVIVORS... THE ROBOTS TOOK THEM, WE GOTTA HELP THEM!

STAN, IT'S ALREADY A MIRACLE I FOUND YOU. I CAN'T SAVE THEM.

LET ME GO.

I...

LET ME GO!

UNH!

STAN...

NO! FUCK! LEAVE ME ALONE! YOU KEEP TRYING TO TAKE ME PLACES, WITHOUT... WITHOUT...

WHAT IF I SAY NO? WHAT YOU GONNA DO, HUH? PUNCH ME IN THE FACE?

WHY SHOULD I TRUST YOU, HUH? WHY?

BECAUSE...

IT'S ME, STAN....

IT'S ME...

DAD.

DAD?

HOW... ?

AT THE START OF THE WAR, HAIVÉ WIPED OUT OUR COMPUTERIZED DEFENSES, AND OUR GREATEST MILITARY ROBOTS SUCCUMBED TO ITS CONTROL.

WE HAD TO IMPROVISE.

I VOLUNTEERED TO PUT MYSELF IN A TELECOMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE. WE HAD TO EQUIP IT WITH AN ELECTROMAGNETIC PULSE CANNON, CAPABLE OF NEUTRALIZING HAIVÉ FROM SPACE.

BUT OUR LAST LINES OF DEFENSE GAVE WAY TOO SOON...

AND THE ROCKET THAT SHOULD HAVE BROUGHT THE CANNON UP, NEVER LEFT THE GROUND.

AFTER A FEW MONTHS, I MANAGED TO HACK IN TO THIS OLD RCK1 FROM THE SATELLITE.

AND THE OTHER NIGHT? WHEN YOU ATTACKED SANDY AND ME?

I'M SORRY.

THE LACK OF SLEEP... I WAS AT MY WITS' END. THE SATELLITE PUT ME IN A STATE OF FORCED SLEEP. AND I LOST CONTROL OF THIS, WELL, "ROCKY".

OF COURSE, HAIVÉ DIDN'T TAKE LONG TO LEARN ABOUT IT. BUT NOW, I KNOW HOW TO GET AROUND ITS FIREWALLS....

UNTIL THE NEXT TIME YOU'RE TIRED.

TRUE.

BUT I UNDERSTOOD SOMETHING.

WHEN IT HAPPENS AGAIN...

RCK1

MY SON WILL BE THE ONE TO TAKE OVER THE CONTROLS.

SO LIKE, HOW DID YOU EVEN FIND ME AGAIN?

BY INTERCEPTING THE TRANSMISSIONS OF ROBOTS SENT TO CAPTURE YOU. I CAN BARELY BELIEVE THAT YOU MANAGED TO GET AWAY.

RIGHT, ENOUGH CHITCHAT, TIME TO GO!

PENG! PENG!

YOU KNOW WHERE WE'RE HEADED?

WELL... UP NORTH. TO NEO-TOLEDO, AND HAIVĒ. RIGHT?

ALMOST. TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I THINK THE ROCKET THAT SHOULD HAVE BROUGHT THE EMP CANNON IS STILL ON THE LAUNCH PAD. IF WE MANAGE TO MAKE IT TAKE OFF...

I GOT IT! I'LL SEND YOU THE CANNON, YOU DESTROY HAIVĒ, AND BOOM, WE SAVE THE PLANET!

THAT DOESN'T SEEM TOO COMPLICATED.

WHEN YOU PUT IT LIKE THAT... YEAH.

TO BE CONTINUED...